

## The Pain of Youth

by Desaix

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The Pain of Youth by David A. Tatum

Disclaimer: Ranma 1/2 obviously does not belong to me, but I do ask its creator, Rumiko Takahashi, and anyone else who owns the copyright on it, that they not sue me for what I feel is simple tribute to the fabulous world they have created. If you do decide to sue me, realize I'm a third year college student who is a journalism major and a creative writing minor- so I'm a broke kid with no real prospects for employment....

Author's Notes: I'd consider this DARK because of a violently graphic ending... other than that, I haven't got much to say.

On with the story... -----

As I sit in my room, applying the finishing touches on my makeup, I look back over the past ninety years and smile. For the first time in my life, the REAL me is able date people. And I'm loving every minute of it.

I smack my lips together as I finish applying the lipstick, and

remember the last time I wore that color, seventy-eight years earlier, to the day. It was at a wedding- the wedding of, perhaps, my two favorite students, Ranma and Akane.

Well, it wasn't a wedding, exactly, now that I think about it. When their first attempt had failed due to bombs, they were thrown closer together than they had ever been before it. Eventually, they decided they really DID want to get married, and eloped to avoid the problems which had ruined their first.

So Soun Tendou, their father... and my first crush... decided that they should hold a religious observation of their marriage- which, I suppose, COULD be called a wedding (though it hardly seems to count as one to me, since they were already married) if you wanted to be all technical about it. Anyway, I had to get all decked out for him, and so went to the store and bought one of EVERYTHING in their makeup department. And I mean everything- my Normal Form, at that time, was QUITE grabby. That was when I last wore lipstick of this color.

I sit down in front of the mirror and began passing a comb through my hair. Gods, what a disaster that was- for me. For Ranma and Akane, it was probably the first time everything had gone right. The competitors for their respective hearts were strangely mute, no fights broke out, and the only thing that happened that was out of the ordinary was Soun stepping on Akane's train, tripping both of them up. Ranma caught Akane before she hit the ground, but Soun fell hard. I ran up, using my fighting fish to turn into my Old Form, hoping to comfort the man I loved. However, one of his other daughters, Nabiki, stood in my way while the third, Kasumi, tended to him.

Anyway, after that little incident, Ranma's and Akane's wedding went smoothly. All too soon, I reverted to my child form, and pestered everybody at the reception. I must have been really annoying, because finally Kasumi approached me and kindly asked me to leave, that Soun had said I was 'too much of a nuisance.'

That was the last time I saw Soun. The incident hurt more than I thought possible- I kept blaming myself for it, my Normal Form for it. Coming from the man I loved, even indirectly, being called a 'nuisance' stung. I vowed never to fall in love again, because my child-like persona would hurt whoever it was I loved too much.

I don't have to worry about that, anymore. Now, aging only one year every six, I look like a healthy eighteen year-old, and act like one too. Now, I can come out of my shell- I look, once more, like the drop-dead gorgeous woman I did back then, in my True Form. I act much mature, now, without first charging up with chi.

I walk to the door, waiting for my date to arrive. I haven't drained anyone in nearly sixty years... not since the twentieth reunion for Ranma and Akane's class. Everyone had come- Ranma, Akane, one of Ranma's ex-fiancees named Ukyou Kuonji (with her date- the recently divorced, and somewhat depressed, Ryouga Hibiki. She told me afterwards it was more of a sympathy date, than anything- the boy was her friend, not her lover... yet), and all their friends from high school.

The event started out well enough. The trouble started, as always, with Ranma and Akane- though it wasn't really THEIR fault, this time.

Both had seemed to age rather well- Ranma was well developed, still, and looked good even if he was starting to lose his hair early, while Akane... to say she filled out spectacularly would be an understatement. And from the way she carried herself, I'd say everything about her was all natural. Suffice to say, their physical appearance probably reignited the interest of... oh... just about everyone who had been interested in them before. No-one would do anything, though, because it was so obvious that they were in love with each other still. Some people, however, just needed a little excuse to hope...

About an hour and a half into it, Akane sloshed her champagne on Ranma's tuxedo. Ranma called her a... what was it again? 'Klutzy Tomboy,' which she responded to with her usual trusty mallet. They BOTH smiled at this... in fact, the whole incident seemed staged, as if to remind people 'yes, we really are the Ranma and Akane you know!' However, some people miss the obvious if it goes against their interests.

Tatewake Kunou, the man who was the principal's son and a gym teacher\kendo coach chaperoning with me that evening AND a former student in love with both Akane AND Ranma's female form, ignored the obvious looks of love which they had given each other during their little exchange and cried out, 'Saotome, you accursed demon! How dare you insult your wife so!'

Ryoga Hibiki, who had also at one time been in love with Akane, had completely missed the incident but heard Tatewake's words. 'Ranma!' he had cried. 'You promised me you were in love with Akane, but I can't believe that is true if you still berate her for the slightest things! Prepare to die!'

Ukyou Kuonji, who had been in love with Ranma at the same time Ryoga was with Akane, could not let her date just manhandle her ex-fiancee, and so jumped in to help.

THAT was when I stepped in to help, draining them all with one blow. I felt a little sorry having to catch Ranma and Akane in the crossfire with it, but it turns out that I was worried for nothing. The two of them had jumped out of the way just before my blast had come.

I hated transforming then. So many of the eyes which had once looked on my Old Form with lust and lechery in their eyes were now looking at that same form with disgust. I promised myself, then, that I could never drain someone again... I quit my job the next day, and lived off of my savings. Not having a husband or children, I was able to stash away quite a bit of money, and with the occasional inheritance I received (there was a surprisingly large one from some old pervert named 'Happosai.' I don't remember who he is, except he had something to do with my chi draining abilities, but I'm very grateful for all the money he left me, and very sorry that he had to go the way he did- drowning in a public bath house, trapped between the male side and the female side) I was able to live comfortably for many decades. I finally started working again, last year- once again as a teacher... this time, of modern history.

My date finally arrives. His name is Jonathan Desaix, a handsome

American businessman with expensive tastes and the money to pay for it. However, instead of riding in a luxury car as we did on our first, and only previous, date, he decides it might be nice to walk to the restaurant. I agree- it's a warm, cloudless night, and the moon was full. A perfect night for a romantic stroll.

As we walk along the street, we pass by the old Tendou Dojo, and I can see inside a pair of old shriveled up people, bouncing around and annoying their kids and grandkids. I think it's Ranma and Akane, still in love with each other after all these years despite looking a lot like that old pervert Happosai... and that other ancient woman, Cologne I believe her name was. The last time I spoke socially to my former students was at the funeral of that poor woman who age finally caught up with, some forty years ago. There were no wild shenanigans then. Ranma, Akane, her great granddaughter Shampoo, that poor myopic boy who had gone his whole life pursuing said great granddaughter, Ryoga Hibiki and his new wife Ukyou, and many others came to see her as her ashes were interred. Not a single word was spoken throughout, and I saw tears in EVERYONE'S eyes, even Ranma's. I felt out of place- I was the only one in the crowd who had not, in some major way, been affected by her. The only reason I was invited, I think, is because some time after the reunion, Shampoo had come to me asking if I would tutor her in Japanese, and I had. I never really knew Cologne, however. Shampoo had said, though, that it was an old Amazon custom for the entire clan, however remotely related to the dead one, to show up for a funeral. Since they had been cast out of their clan for failing to win Ranma's heart, she had said, they needed to find a new clan to fulfill the tradition, and I was part of it.

My thoughts are interrupted by my date pulling his arm away from me. I turn to see what the problem is, only to find that he isn't the one doing the pulling. Someone wearing a black ski mask and a black gi has covered my date's face with some kind of cloth, knocking him out. "What-" I start to say.

"Shut up, bitch, and let us do what we want, and we'll go easy on you- maybe let you live when we're done with you!" he says, pulling out a wicked looking knife as three others dressed like him emerge from the shadows. Two of them go through Jonathan's pockets, pulling out his wallet and other personal items. The other one joins his companion as they approach me, carnal looks on their faces.

I scream and jump back. The two of them come running after me, not wanting me to escape. Desperate, I reach into my pocket and find a coin, hoping that I can still remember how to do this.

"HAPPO GO-EN SATSU!" I cry, holding the coin out in front of me. All the fighting spirit leaves their bodies and is absorbed by mine.

I panic. I hadn't thought this through clearly, and now the now uncontrolled bodies of the two attackers are flying at my shriveled and brittle ninety year old body. I try to move out of the way, but my joints ache too much for me to move, and soon I am crushed under the weight of two large men.

I feel my ribs break, and my hip socket shatter. The pain is unbearable, and the other two hoodlums have been attracted by the blast. However, those two never arrive- a withered old pair of three foot tall martial artists tears into them, probably breaking every bone in their bodies.

I am beyond care by that point, however, because my body changes back into it's Normal Form, and the process severely worsens my injuries- my ribs are pushed back into me as my chest firms up, tearing apart my lungs and lacerating other internal organs.

The two bodies on top of me are tossed away, and standing over me are a pair of old crones. If I could, I would slap myself right there- I had just been turned into just such an old woman myself, and I had not aged as well as these two. "Ms. Hinako, are you all right?" they ask repeatedly.

I try to say something to reassure them, but I can't. The bald one turns to his wife and says "Akane, she isn't responding! What do we do?"

The other one grimaces, and I can see she doesn't really know how to handle this either. I can see in her eyes that she isn't about to give up, either. "Ranma, you take Ms. Hinako to the hospital. I'll stay here and look after her date."

Ranma picks me up carefully and leaps onto a nearby building, hopping along the rooftops at breakneck speed. I could tell, though, that he is going slower than usual to avoid jarring me, and cradles me to his chest protectively. I spend some of the last of my strength to smile. I know I am not going to live, but still he fights with all his skill to keep me alive. I close my eyes, resigned to my fate, and remember all I can about my attempted savior.

Yes, they truly are... were... my favorite students...

----- Author's Notes: I don't know where this came from. The idea started while I was prereading something which had Hinako in it, and began wondering how she aged. I figured that she looked about 5 or 6 when Happosai 'saved' her while she was in the hospital, and her chi drain didn't appear to change her then. However, by the time she shows up in Nerima, she looks about 8 or 9 normally, and grows to... well, a very well developed age, whatever that is, when she absorbs someone. I figured she aged at, oh, maybe a 1 year every 5 or 6 years in her usual form, and that she aged regularly- or perhaps even a little faster than normal- in her chi-enhanced form. And, using that idea, I came up with this. I had to write it right away (hey, at least a small part of the reason I'm taking a break from Return of the Sisters is so that I can write a number of short fics, anyway) and so, here it is.

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